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. CHURCH POETRY AND MUSIC,

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with

Notes on Hymnody in the

Presbyterian Church

(N. S.)

From the

Presbyterian Quarterly Review

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THE

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ARTICLE VI.

CHURCH POETRY AND MUSIC.

In the first number of this Review we made a *quasi* promise to discuss the subject of Hymnology, but have hitherto not found time. The fact that the General Assembly have directed the Publication Committee to go fully into this subject, invests it with interest at this moment. To see how thoroughly the Assembly have gone into this matter, we have only to glance at the parts of their plan which have been confided to the Committee. They are,

1. The purchase of the Church Psalmist, the Psalm and Hymn Book in most general use in our churches.

2. Authority to arrange for the acquiring, if it can be had at a reasonable price, of the Parish Psalmody, a book used to some extent in the Middle and Southern States.

3. The Psalter, in the common version, is committed to Rev. Dr. Duffield, of Detroit, to be prepared for chanting.

4. Drs. Beman, Barnes, and Fisher, are appointed to prepare a supplement to the Church Psalmist, that the collection may be as complete as possible.

5. The Publication Committee are to appoint a committee of three persons, who are to correspond with pastors, leaders of choirs, and other suitable persons, in order to ascertain what tunes are in general use and approved by the churches, that those may be selected that have thus been sanctioned by the general approbation, not only of the present but of past times. The committee will thus be prepared to publish a *Tune-book* for the Church.

As all these several objects are in the hands of the Church itself, and thus all selfish and private interests are excluded, the Committee can work to the direct point of securing a complete system of apparatus, which may be made the medium through which the praises of God may be suitably celebrated

in the sanctuary. We rejoice in the full and free trust which the Assembly have thus reposed in the Committee. They have the opportunity of accomplishing a work that has never yet been fully done by any Protestant Church, and we hope that the thoroughness with which everything actually accomplished by this Committee has been carried out, will be but the earnest of the manner in which its business is ever to be conducted. We had rather that everything undertaken, even if slowly carried on, should be well finished, than that sundry projects should be begun at once, and all imperfectly prosecuted.

The first broad remark which must be made on the subject of hymnology is, that, *considering the elements of power given in this part of Divine worship, there is a signal failure to make of it what it should be.*

God offers Himself as an object of affection and adoration. But he is boundless in his own nature. The impulses of the soul, when it strives to touch infinity, have more than the fullest sway. When the imagination, strengthened by faith, has reached the limits of the created universe, it has passed over only that little portion of Jehovah that has been expressed. Even we, feeble as we are, have a world within us, for which we cannot find fitting expression. The artist, poet, orator, all feel how faint are marble, colors, words, gestures, to body forth the images which the soul finds opening upon its vision.

> Lo! these are but the whisper of His ways,
> But the thunder of His power, who can understand!

God is eternal. Before all worlds, He is. We cannot understand it. We earnestly rejoice that we cannot. What kind of a God would he be whom a creature could comprehend! The very essence of a creature's glory is to yearn after something better than itself, to go beyond its poor, narrow conditions, and seek for closer and closer union with beings high, pure, and holy. The Highest and Holiest of all has invited us to know and love Himself, and to draw into intimate union with Him. What the religion of Boodh originally meant, at the first and earliest spring of its tradition, by absorption into God, is—

however now perverted into mere annihilation—in reality the highest and grandest thing of which humanity is capable, or for which it has to hope.

In this part of Divine service, then, in the language of our Directory for Worship, we "humbly adore the infinite majesty of the living God." Whatever of excellence in word or rhythm, or harmony or elevation of spirit man is capable of, finds scope here. So far from there being any limitation for want of a wide field, the fact is, that we are only straitened by our own incapacities. Whatever mortal can do in rising to the immortal, there is here scope for its doing; the range is literally infinite.

In the fact that hymns speak mainly of redemption, we see another element of their intrinsic power,—if we only knew how to make that power available. We do not know how to express ourselves better than in words we once before used: "As redemption is the mightiest work the universe has yet known, or perhaps can know, the clearest apprehension of it, and the sublimest aspirations born of it, must be the very highest style of thought and feeling. The nearest approach to the Omnipotent must be the nearest approach to the true sublime, and this must be found in the clearest idea and deepest feeling of the God-man and the Incarnation. The angels bend down continually to look into it, and it is nothing less than the central idea of eternity and infinity."

Here we see again, that it is not the subject which fails, but our human power to reach it. The only limitation is the limitation of humanity itself, and its power of expression.

It is to be added, that the sacredness of Divine praise is a great power, if rightly used. It is only on this principle, that we can account for the fact that such extraordinary psalms as Rouse's Version, and Sternhold and Hopkins have kept their place for centuries in the British Isles and in America, and that such mere commonplace as many of our hymns, are tolerated in our Church-books. Let any one read the sublime Hebrew odes, in the Book of Psalms, in the original, or even in the English version; remembering, however, that he is reading a prose-translation of vivid poetry; and turning from this, with his soul aglow, let him find Christian congregations imagining

that they are singing the same thing, when they are following precentor or clerk, uplifting, through his nose, the following:

A man was famous, and was had
In es-ti-ma-ti-on,
According as he lifted up
His axe, thick trees upon.

The intense commonplace of much of the Episcopal book is no better:

To ten-string'd instruments we'll sing,
With tuneful psalteries join'd;
And to the harp, with solemn sounds,
For sacred use design'd.

It is on the same principle that masses of the most ordinary rhyme are published every year as religious poetry; pious feeling does not like to reject that which is sincerely written, which contains correct sentiment, and—for the writer at least—real emotion. Hence the standard of secular poetry is often higher than that of religious.

How true this is, that, where persons are very greatly interested in a subject, they will tolerate the most ordinary and commonplace expositions of it, is seen in patriotic songs, which are proverbial for homeliness. The same principle finds illustration in domestic poetry—songs of the affections. The feeling, universal and deep as it is, bears upon its current every form of verse, as a river, in flood, carries with it the drift-wood of the whole region.

But, while all this is true, no one will yet imagine that it is a disadvantage, in writing poetry of country or fireside, that the writer has a strong and overpowering feeling ready to sympathize with him. And so in devotional poetry, that the strongest emotion of which humanity is capable, stands ready to embalm his verse, is a capital advantage for the sacred poet; that human nature will consecrate it in its holiest hopes and memories is the very hiding of his power.

Another idea, which shows how great a failure there has been, on the whole, in the power of Divine praise, is, that the form in which it appears, no less than the substance, is of the very

finest. Surely nothing is more exquisite than music! God has chosen for his praise the most beautiful of all methods of expression. It is finer than the medium of the artist, though he make the canvas almost speak; finer than the purest Pentelican marble, though wrought by Phidias; finer than Greek Parthenon, or Gothic Cologne, though the one seemed glorious enough to bring the gods to earth, and the other to raise men aspiring flame-like unto heaven; finer even than the living voice of the orator in his most impassioned moods.

If the deepest thoughts and emotions of man be at all capable of expression,—if they be not wholly to perish for want of some medium of utterance, then, surely, music is the most perfect of earthly media for that expression. For what is music? The Almighty has so constructed all sounds in nature that, when brought together under certain circumstances and proportions, they produce harmony. This is especially the case with human voices and those instruments which imitate them. The voices of men, women, and children are all diverse; and yet, by skilful training and arrangement, may be so blended as to produce an exquisite delight. Further, there are feelings, which are very imperfectly expressible in words or gestures. When the nobler and gentler emotions fill men's minds, they naturally flow out in poetry; instead of finding rhythm and measure fetters, they are felt to be wings. Law is not burdensome except to the lawless, and the accurate orbit of the planet is its perfection. Sacred song, then, is the natural expression of high devotion, and when the rapture of prayer and praise is allied to music worthy of it, we surely have the very noblest form of expression of which man is capable. In this, then, as in all else that belongs to our religion, God has wrought perfectly, man only is in fault; we are not straitened in God, but we are straitened in ourselves.

The old philosophers had an idea, which appears in various forms, about the music of the spheres. "The stars in their courses," says one of them, "perpetually give out music, but it is in sounds too vast and constant to be heard." The idea which lay at the basis of this mode of thought, seems to be that

in God's world as he made it there is no jar; that he created the universe a perfect harmony. Hence they beautifully imagined that the worlds in their orbits, the winds in their whispering breezes and their wildest roarings, the waters as they tunefully trip by the mossy roots and the small pebbles, or pour themselves in masses over the cataract, or lift up their hands on high in tempest on the ocean,—that all these, with whatever else makes up nature, were one choral harmony. And it is very striking to observe how something like this universal chorus fills the imagination of the sacred writers both when speaking of earth and heaven:

> Praise ye the Lord from the heavens:
> Praise him in the heights.
> Praise ye him, all his angels:
> Praise ye him, all his hosts.
> Praise ye him, sun and moon:
> Praise him, all ye stars of light.
> Praise him, ye heavens of heavens,
> Ye waters that be above the heavens.
> Praise the Lord from the earth,
> Ye dragons and all deeps:
> Fire and hail; and snow and vapor:
> Stormy wind fulfilling his word:
> Mountains and all hills; fruitful trees and all cedars:
> Beasts and all cattle; creeping things and flying fowl.

And so when the imagination and faith of the sacred writers fix upon heaven. Ten thousand times ten thousand angels, seraphim and cherubim, "thrones, virtues, dominations, powers," without number, numberless, mingle their voices with the multitude of the ransomed from every kindred and nation and people and tongue which is under the wide heaven, while the new heavens and the new earth responsive, fill the universe with the echoes of their harmony.

God's Church on earth contains the germ of his universe; it is a theatre upon which is represented the great principles and emotions of his mighty moral government. God's temple on earth is the type and emblem of his temple above. "Which serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as

Moses was admonished of God, when he was about to make the tabernacle, for see (saith he) that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount." If these things be so, then all the services of the Church should be worthy of this high position.

It is a wonderful thing, when we think of it, how God has made the human race a choir of music. It is surely no accidental thing that the deep voice of the mature man in one part, that of the mature woman in another, that of the maiden in a third, and that of the boy in still another part of music, are so constructed by the heavenly Architect of the human frame, as that their union makes a perfect harmony. Especially does this possess a deep meaning when connected with God's command:

> Praise ye the Lord,
> Kings of the earth and all people:
> Princes, and all judges of the earth:
> Both young men and maidens;
> Old men and children:
> Let them praise the name of the Lord:
> For his name alone is excellent,
> His glory is above the earth and heaven.

Here is an adaptation of the right hand of the Most High.

Look a little at the ideal of worship, and see how the Almighty has adapted it to all that is in man. Its basis is devotion, the worship of the infinitely great and good Being. In prayer especially is the moral nature in exercise, with the emotions of the soul. The intellect, will, and passions, are addressed especially in the solemn communication of the ambassador of Christ; the heart through the senses, human love mingling with divine in the ordinances; the social principle in the gathering together of the great congregation. But in man besides is the love of beauty, that principle which the Hellenic nation was raised up to illustrate; that feeling which lies at the basis of the fine arts, of architecture and painting and statuary, poetry and music, the finer graces and loveliness of life and society, the courtesies of intercourse and the sweetness of

a refined home. God put it in man, and in worship he would not omit it. Hence praise, with poetry and music.

David was a man after God's own heart, and when the Lord had given him rest from his enemies round about, as he sat in his palace and thought of the magnificence which had been gathered in a habitation for a child of clay, a sinful man, and fading like the leaf, he turned to Nathan and said, "See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains." And when the Lord forbid him to build the house because he had been a man of war, instead of availing himself of this as an excuse, as any one but a man great of soul and full of the love of God would have done, he expended countless treasures upon the materials for the Temple, so completed by Solomon as to be the wonder of the world. This is the spirit in which the worship of God should be conducted. No expenditure of time, wealth, or talent is too great that God may be rightly honored.

All that we can do for our fellow-men depends upon the worship of God. The Church is the centre of all good. Upon its attractiveness depends the virtue of the people more than upon all other causes. Hence with so much pains and expense have our fathers provided for the education of the ministry. For this purpose they built academies and colleges and theological seminaries at immense cost—cost none too great. For this purpose they have prescribed a long and laborious course of education, *that the ministry may be able rightly to conduct the worship of God;* that his temple may be the centre of love, devotion, respect, and delight from the people. In the same spirit ought the architecture of God's temple to be imposing, the interior of his house solemn and yet pleasant, and all the services to be so conducted as to satisfy the moral nature, the affections, the intellect, and the imagination,—all that is holy and blessed in man.

No part of divine worship stood higher in the affections of the Hebrews than sacred song. When the Lord brought them through the Red Sea, Moses made a magnificent hymn of gratitude and triumph, in which he was not withheld by

motives like those of the effeminate religion of our time from rejoicing in God's victory over his enemies. Moses sang this psalm, and the children of Israel—they chanted it high and loud over Egypt's dark sea. "And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her, with timbrels and with dances." In responsive choirs they poured out their patriotic and religious triumph:

> Sing ye to Jehovah!
> He hath triumphed gloriously!
> Horse and rider hath he thrown into the sea!

When Deborah and Barak discomfited Sisera at the ancient river Kishon, the stars in their courses fighting against him, the prophetess composed another glorious hymn of triumph:

> Zebulun and Napthali were the people!
> They jeoparded their lives unto the death
> In the high places of the field!
> O my soul! thou hast trodden down strength!
> So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord!
> But them that love thee
> Let them be as the sun going forth in his might!

When the king of Moab rebelled against Jehoram, king of Israel, the latter allied himself with Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, and the king of Edom. Perishing for water in the wilderness they came to Elisha the seer. After a severe rebuke of Jehoram, and a declaration to the three kings that but for Jehoshaphat he would not look towards them,—so glorious then was the courage of God's ambassadors,—the stern old prophet then gave what seems to us the strange order, "Now bring me a minstrel. And it came to pass, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the Lord came upon him." So when Saul was troubled by an evil spirit, it was the harp of David that soothed him.

There is another striking narrative in the twentieth chapter of Second Chronicles. A confederation of fierce tribes was formed against Jehoshaphat, king of Judah. The king proclaimed a fast, and all Judah stood before the Lord, with their

little ones, their wives and their children. When they had humbled themselves and prayed—"then upon Jahaziel, the son of Zechariah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, came the Spirit of the Lord in the midst of the congregation." When his triumphant prophecy was silent, and Jehoshaphat with all Judah had bowed their heads before the Lord, then stood up the Levites to praise the Lord God of Israel with a loud voice on high. On the next day, as they went to the battle, Jehoshaphat "appointed singers unto the Lord, and that should praise the beauty of holiness, as they went out before the army, and to say, Praise the Lord; for his mercy endureth forever. *And when they began to sing and to praise*, the Lord set ambushments against the children of Ammon, Moab and Mount Seir, which were come against Judah; and they were smitten." Such honor did the Lord put upon holy song.

To the Temple service in the praise of God were devoted by David *four thousand Levites.* These he divided into twenty-four classes, who were placed under the instruction of two hundred and eighty-eight teachers. At their head, as commanders of this musical host, were Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun. To Asaph was assigned the care of instruments of percussion; to Heman, whose skill is compared to the wisdom of Solomon, was confided the wind instruments; and to Jeduthun or Ethan, whom some think to be the Greek Orpheus, stringed instruments. Heman's three daughters are mentioned as skilled in music. On the return from Babylon the Jews brought a choir of two hundred musicians. We find, then, that the practice of the ancient Church corresponded with our theory of the value of this part of divine worship.

In looking for the causes of this failure properly to dignify divine praise, it is necessary to examine *the faults of the hymns in common use.*

One is that they are too *didactic.* Say what we may of the influence of custom and cultivation, it lies in the nature of human mind to prefer the concrete to the abstract. A regularly didactic poem is not lyric; we must sacrifice the one or the other characteristic. Of course it does not follow that a

lyric song is not instructive, but the instruction must be either in the way of expressed feeling, or example, or concentrated apophthegm. We take a specimen of each from Dr. Watts. For instance, of the first kind, combining instruction with lyric feeling:

> One glance of thine, one piercing ray
> Would kindle darkness into day.

Where the omniscience of God is powerfully taught.

Of the second, we may quote an almost perfect figure, which is *concrete didactic:*

> The haughty sinner I have seen,
> Not fearing man, nor God;
> Like a tall bay-tree, fair and green,
> Spreading his arms abroad.
>
> And lo! he vanished from the ground,
> Destroyed by hands unseen;
> Nor root, nor branch, nor leaf was found
> Where all that pride had been.

A choir must be a very bad one, who will not sing these stanzas expressively.

Of the third, we give an example which possesses in some measure all three excellences; feeling, picturesqueness, and sententiousness:

> Some walk in honor's gaudy show;
> Some dig for golden ore;
> They toil for heirs, they know not who,
> And straight are seen no more.

But other hymnologists, and Watts himself, are not always so happy. Many hymns will immediately occur to our readers as resting on a dead level of commonplace exhortation and instruction, and tending to produce dulness in a whole congregation.

Another fault is *sentimentality.* We admit the difficulty of drawing the line between true feeling and mere sentiment. Persons, too, are so differently constructed, that what appears affected to one is natural to another: one class would call a

hymn *sweet*, while another would call it *sentimental*. Still, the difference is founded upon nature, and it is one of the sternest requisites, if any one would write sacred songs which will *live*, that he should understand just where this line is drawn.

"Feeling," said the late Miss Landon, "weeps over the grave of a friend, sentiment plants the rose and the willow to weep too." The feeling of sorrow for bereavement at death is universal; refined and *recherché* methods of expressing it would not carry popular sympathy. One of the points of difference is that a hymn must not be for the few but for the many. "The pulpit," Isaac Taylor says, "belongs to the people," because cultivated persons can learn the will of God from books, but the masses rely upon oral instruction. It is so with hymns. A sacred song that the humblest cannot understand may be considered a failure. The true hymn is such an one as the reader remembers hearing five thousand people in Kentucky sing:

> Through many dangers, toils, and snares,
> I have already come;
> 'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,
> And grace will bring me home.

Montgomery has the same fault, in part. What more beautiful than,

> The dead are like the stars by day,
> Withdrawn from human eye,
> Yet not extinct, they hold their way
> In glory through the sky.

Yet it is not a good stanza for a hymn; the feeling in some way evaporates while we are admiring the figure. It were unjust to call it a conceit, and yet, while singing or repeating it, one is rather looking at a thing than feeling it.

In further illustration of this idea, we might remark that Moore was an admirable song-writer for a certain class of society, but even if he had possessed the necessary moral qualifications, his style of thought would have prevented success as a writer of hymns. Thus, how beautiful the figure, akin to Montgomery's:

Then sorrow touched by thee grows bright,
With more than rapture's ray,
As darkness shows us worlds of light
We never saw by day.

Beautiful as this is, the thought is not obvious. It could never carry with it a popular assembly.

There is something of the same fault in Kirke White. One or two of his hymns come within the magic circle of popularity—or at least one. But usually they do not. What a beautiful sacred poem is the hymn which contains this stanza:

Howl, winds of night; your force combine;
Without his high behest,
Ye shall not, in the mountain pine,
Disturb the sparrow's nest.

Yet, as a hymn, it is not successful. It is too recondite; the imagery takes the mind off from the feeling; it is too individual. We feel the difference so soon as we repeat a verse of a true hymn upon the power of God:

Beneath the shadow of thy throne,
Thy saints have dwelt secure;
Sufficient is thine arm alone,
And our defence is sure.

The same criticism must be made upon Bishop Heber, notwithstanding the Missionary Hymn. For instance, what a beautiful poem on death he has written:

Beneath our feet, and o'er our head,
Is equal warning given;
Beneath us lie the countless dead,
Above us is the heaven.

But it has not attained popularity as a hymn. Compare Charles Wesley for the reason:

One family we dwell in him,
One church above, beneath,
Though now divided by the stream,
The narrow stream of death.

3. A third fault is one that has been nearly banished from our hymn books—the making of our sacred songs too *erotic*. We regret to say that the spirit of our time is not only adverse to this, but tends almost to dislike of anything tender and endearing in the personal communion of the believer and his Lord. No one can enter into the heart of the Song of Songs, or the expressions of the apostles John and Paul, in relation to union between the Christian and our blessed Lord, without feeling that the Church in our day is in danger of losing that intense and loving individualism which is the life of religion.

Still there have been in some of the Methodist and Moravian hymns, and possibly in some of our own, expressions which good taste cannot sanction. One trembles, at times, when reading such works as those of Mrs. Rowe and Madame Guyon, lest he may have overpassed the limits of reverence. The Romish legends, as that of St. Catharine and the *stigmata*, fostered these feelings, and they are to be guarded against. Yet, we sigh sometimes, in this conventional age, for a feeling in the Church which could make such a danger possible. For one Elizabeth of Bavaria, we have scores of decorous persons, whose love to the Redeemer is of so general and feeble a sort, that we need not earnestly condemn this error.

4. The opposite fault is *frigidness* in psalms and hymns. There can be no question that some that are sung, leave the congregation much colder than they found it. We have opened the Congregational Book at a hymn by Enfield. What effect could singing the following stanzas have but a frigid one?

> How vain of wisdom's gift the boast!
> Of reason's lamp how faint the ray!
>
> Follies and sins, a countless sum
> Are crowded in life's little span;
> How ill, alas! does pride become
> That erring, guilty, creature man!

Good sentiments! but certainly not lyric.

The injury done by forcing congregations to sing five or six frigid or merely didactic verses, which are totally destitute of

true poetic fire, is greater than even ministers always see. The worship of God should be a perfect whole; the attention should be arrested at the beginning, and kept up without flagging to the close; but to this end, prayers, sermons, and psalmody, should correspond and be filled with a common feeling. Unless worship excite emotion, it has failed of its primary object.

The characteristics of a true psalm or hymn are something like the following:

The first condition is *evangelical feeling.* This is indispensable. It is an element which is but seldom found in any poetry not composed expressly for the sanctuary, and too often not even there. What is the Gospel? The Almighty, in the eternal ages past, determined to gather for himself a glorious company of beings. They were to be created in his own image, of high natures, free, but with possibility of change. They were to be tried; multitudes of them passing through innumerable and sore difficulties, where every joint of their harness should be proved, and almost every possibility of impairing their loyalty exhausted. These blessed myriads, so tried and found faithful, were to be confirmed in pure and perfect holiness, and with confidence entire, and now unimpairable, they are to start afresh on a high and most glorious career of usefulness and enjoyment. These are the picked men of the universe, the chosen of the Almighty, the elect of God. The foundation of this mighty and transcendent system is laid in the life and death of the Son of God, and the central life and love of the universe of holy creatures, is their life from Him and love to Him.

The song of the elect on their march to celestial glory, the mourn and the lament, the love and the sorrow, the affection for each other and their crucified Lord, the battle and the victory of the Sacramental Host,—these are what we call the psalms and the hymns of the Church.

Who is sufficient for these things? In catching the glorious idea and carrying it out, Watts and Charles Wesley are, beyond all question, pre-eminent.

There is something very beautiful in the character of Philip

Doddridge. He did everything well. As a theological professor, he was eminently useful; his sermons were the delight of his time, and greatly profitable; his Rise and Progress is a religious classic, meeting a state of mind and heart which seems well-nigh universal; his conversation fitted him to be the favorite of the most polished circles, while of hymn-writers—below the highest—he is one of the best. We need only mention the first lines of his hymns:

Jesus, I love thy charming name.—
Do I not love thee, oh! my Lord?—
Hark, the glad sound, the Saviour comes.—
Now let our cheerful eyes survey.—
Ye golden lamps of heaven, farewell.

There are two stanzas of Doddridge's, however, generally printed in different hymns, which should be together, and which we agree with Professor Tayler Lewis in thinking among the noblest hymn-writing in any language:

'Tis God's all-animating voice,
That calls thee from on high;
'Tis his own hand presents the prize
To thine aspiring eye.

Behold Jehovah's royal hand
A radiant crown display,
Whose gems with vivid lustre shine
When suns and stars decay.

John Newton is eminently evangelical, with much deep and tender feeling, but little of the fire of poetry; while Mrs. Steele, in all that is sweet and plaintive in Christian expression, is deservedly and universally admired.

No Christian ever lived who did not love Cowper; and the whole Church owe a debt of love to Mrs. Browning for her exquisite eulogy:

Nor ever shall he be in praise
By wise or good forsaken:
Named softly, as the household name
Of one whom God has taken.

The very world, by God's constraint,
From falsehood's ways removing,
Its women and its men became,
Beside him, true and loving.

Cowper has given us:

There is a fountain filled with blood.—
Far from the world, oh Lord, I flee.—
Hark, my soul! it is the Lord.—
O for a closer walk with God.

And one to which we will refer in another connection.

It is remarkable that there are several examples of authors writing one, and one only, superior hymn.

Kelly, who has published a number of hymns, some of them both excellent and popular, has written one of remarkable beauty, "The head that once was crowned with thorns."

Another example is D. Turner, the exquisite hymn founded on the apostle's expression, "Seen of angels:" "Beyond the glittering, starry skies."

Miss Williams has written a single hymn that will always keep its place, "While thee I seek, protecting power."

There is one remarkable hymn by Ockum, "Awaked by Sinai's awful sound."

Sternhold and Hopkins have one sublime psalm, "The Lord descended from above."

Muhlenberg: "I would not live alway."

A remarkable example is the old hymn, whose author is unknown, "Jerusalem! my happy home."

Toplady has written, "Rock of ages, cleft for me."

And W. M. Bunting, "O God! how often hath thine ear."

A second and essential characteristic of a good hymn is the union of *lyric feeling with rhythmical flow.*

We have already said that a hymn must be evangelical; when we add to this that it must be lyric, we make an addition that is easier understood than expressed. It must be fit to be sung; it must express emotion; the emotion must be such as a multitude can feel, and it must be such as they can feel together. The tide of emotion must bear the heart along with it; and it

ought to be so sustained as to increase in intensity to the end. For this purpose, it is obvious that the hymn must be short; the vividness of lyric feeling forbids it to be long sustained.

The form is rhythm. Rhythm is the succession or flow of sound or motion in harmonious arrangement. It is the same in principle as symmetry in sculpture or architecture. We are free, in English poetry, from the difficulties which beset the Greek, because, understanding how to pronounce the language, we are not troubled with long and short syllables, but go by our ear. Rhythm corresponds to what we call *time* in music, or in hymns *metre*. It is quite different from *tune*. Common metre, for instance, can be sung to hundreds of tunes. If a soldier cannot keep time to music, he is drilled mechanically to step with others, else he makes a jar through a whole regiment.

In Moore's Canadian Boat Song, the distinction is well-marked:

> Faintly as tolls the evening chime,
> Our voices keep *tune*, and our oars keep *time*.

Rhythm, then, is the musical flow of language. The world is full of rhythms, in sound, speech, motion, everywhere.

Beauty of words, and the art by which sound is the echo of sense, is by no means to be despised in hymns. Anything which adds to beauty and enjoyment in sacred praise, provided it do not interfere with devotion, is to be approved. The Hebrew poet did not despise the use of alliteration, or the expressiveness derived from union of voice and sound. There is more of this in the hymns that are popular than would be supposed. For instance, of alliteration:

> To show thy love, by morning light,
> And talk of all thy truth at night.
>
> And bless his works, and bless his word.
>
> Like brutes they live, like brutes they die.
>
> High as the heavens our voices raise.
>
> And earth with her ten thousand tongues.
>
> Wide as the world is thy command.
>
> Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood.

But timorous mortals start and shrink.
Could we but climb where Moses stood.

Of expressive and beautiful words:

And thy soft wings, celestial dove.
Seize the kind promise while it waits.
At thy rebuke the billows die.
The earth lies still and fears.
There is a stream whose gentle flow.

Hymns may be very obviously divided into *subjective* and *objective*. Of the former kind, those which express the personal experience of the writer, and of course of all who enter into the spirit of the hymn—the productions of no uninspired man probably can be compared with those of Charles Wesley. We make a few extracts of hymns, not familiar, as we imagine, to our readers. We think they will thank us for the enjoyment they afford to every person of taste and piety. We would remind the reader, just here, of the fact that a large number of the Psalms of David are made up of statements of his own experience, and that these have always been the delight of Christians in every age. We insert the following hymn as Wesley wrote it. It is generally published in a mutilated and injured form.

Come, let us join our friends above,
That have obtained the prize,
And on the eagle wings of love,
To joys celestial rise:
Let all the saints terrestrial sing,
With those to glory gone;
For all the servants of our King,
In earth and heaven, are one.

One family we dwell in Him,
One Church above, beneath,
Though now divided by the stream,
The narrow stream of death:
One army of the living God,
To his command we bow;
Part of the host have crossed the flood,
And part are crossing now.

Ten thousand to their endless home
  This solemn moment fly;
And we are to the margin come,
  And we expect to die:
His militant embodied host,
  With wishful looks we stand,
And long to see that happy coast,
  And reach the heavenly land.

Our old companions in distress
  We haste again to see,
And eager long for our release
  And full felicity:
Even now by faith we join our hands
  With those that went before;
And greet the blood-besprinkled bands
  On the eternal shore.

Our spirits too shall quickly join,
  Like theirs with glory crowned,
And shout to see our Captain's sign,
  To hear his trumpet sound.
O that we now might grasp our Guide!
  O that the word were given!
Come, Lord of hosts, the waves divide,
  And land us all in heaven!

We give part of a hymn, which, in a mutilated form, is very popular in the West.

O what hath Jesus bought for me?
  Before my ravish'd eyes
Rivers of life divine I see,
  And trees of Paradise:
They flourish in perpetual bloom,
  Fruit every month they give;
And to the healing leaves who come
  Eternally shall live.

I see a world of spirits bright,
  Who reap the pleasures there;
They all are robed in purest white,
  And conquering palms they bear:
Adorned by their Redeemer's grace,
  They close pursue the Lamb;

And every shining front displays
The unutterable Name.

They drink the vivifying stream,
They pluck the ambrosial fruit,
And each records the praise of Him,
Who tuned his golden lute:
At once they strike the harmonious wire,
And hymn the great Three-One:
He hears! he smiles! and all the choir
Fall down before his throne!

Oh! what are all my sufferings here,
If, Lord, thou count me meet
With that enraptured host to appear,
And worship at thy feet!
Give joy or grief, give ease or pain,
Take life or friends away;
I come, to find them all again
In that eternal day!

We have hesitated a little about quoting a third hymn of heaven. There is a class of our readers, however, that we are sure will like the following:

To that Jerusalem above
With singing I repair;
While in the flesh, my hope and love,
My heart and soul, are there:
There my exalted Saviour stands,
My merciful High Priest,
And still extends his wounded hands,
To take me to his breast.

What is there here to court my stay,
Or hold me back from home,
While angels beckon me away,
And Jesus bids me come?
Shall I regret my parted friends,
Still in the vale confined?
Nay, but whene'er my soul ascends,
They will not stay behind.

Oh, what a blessed hope is ours!
While here on earth we stay,

We more than taste the heavenly powers,
And antedate that day:
We feel the resurrection near,
Our life in Christ concealed,
And with his glorious presence here
Our earthen vessels filled.

Oh, would he more of heaven bestow,
And let the vessel break,
And let our ransomed spirits go
To grasp the God we seek:
In rapturous awe on Him to gaze,
Who bought the right for me;
And shout, and wonder at his grace
Through all eternity!

Breadth or massiveness in handling is the appropriate attribute of the objective hymn.

God moves in a mysterious way,

is a fine specimen. Dr. Watts excels all others in this species of hymn. The specimens, of course, are too familiar to quote, and need only be indicated.

We are not sure but one psalm of this kind, by Watts, is the finest in the world. We mean

Before Jehovah's awful throne.

Another, which we have always greatly admired, is the 148th Psalm:

Loud hallelujahs to the Lord!

There is a hymn of Watts, that is admirable in a critical point of view, obeying the rule of beginning quietly and rising gradually in greater and greater majesty:

How should the sons of Adam's race,
Be pure before their God?

Each stanza rises above the preceding, until the close:

He walks upon the stormy sea,
Flies on the stormy wind:
There's none can trace his wondrous way,
Or his dark footsteps find.

In the minor key is

Lord! what a thoughtless wretch was I—

A psalm, that has the peculiar ring of the old Hebrew, is one that we are, perhaps, peculiar in admiring—the seventy-sixth:

In Judah, God of old was known!

Millions, it may be said, have been softened and elevated by

How pleasant, how divinely fair!

And

Sweet is the work,—my God! my King!

The ninety-third Psalm is compact as well as massive:

Jehovah reigns; he dwells in light.

It is, perhaps, in consequence of the necessity of this quality to a sacred song, made as it is to upbear the devotion of multitudes, that so very few good hymns have been written by women. We should certainly have supposed that the fact would be otherwise. Looking at the great number of truly pious women; at the warmth of their nature; at the delight they take in the exercises of public worship,—we should have supposed that many sacred lyrics would bear their names. It is well known, however, that the number of them is few, and that nearly all that have acquired any popularity are plaintive and penitential.

We should have supposed that Mrs. Hemans, and especially Mrs. Browning, would write delicious hymns. But their poetry is too *recherché;* the imagination, or the fancy, is rather individual than general, and there is a want of that massiveness that fits a poem for popular use, just as a woman would be delightful in conversation but out of place as an orator. The authoress of the "Cry of the Human," and "He giveth his beloved Sleep," probably could not address effectively an audience of two thousand men; and hymn-writing, after all, is like oratory. *It forms words that thrill thousands of all classes and characters, and thrill them all at once.* Words, that will do this,

must be at the same time simple and dramatic, understood in a moment, and yet carrying profound feeling,—those universal things that are "borne inward unto souls afar."

It is essential, that a hymn contain a *clear thought* that can be recognized at once. Thoughts that are entangled, that require time for reflection, like the most of Wordsworth's, much of Coleridge and Shelley, and some of the finest sonnets in the language, are entirely unsuitable for hymns. The same canon requires that a hymn be not crowded with thought. It should flow like a clear brook through a wood, pellucid, fresh, reflecting leaves and skies, musical, yet still onward to its goal. What fine unity of thought runs through the Psalms of David! yet it is such thought as belongs to universal humanity. The ninetieth Psalm, for example—the Prayer of Moses, the man of God—on human frailty and Divine strength; or the ninety-first —protection to those who love God; or the ninety-second—the elevation of heart in praise, and the brutishness of those who never look upward to God; or the ninety-third—the majesty of Jehovah, before whom nothing can live but holiness. And so we might almost pass through the Psalms, and find everything illustrative of this principle. Nothing can possibly be more false than the idea that a sacred song can be permanently successful without clear and valuable thoughts; but impractical men are forever confounding philosophic ideas with those that are living and breathing, coming fresh from one heart to set on fire the hearts of all. Nor are the latter class of thoughts inferior in interest or value to the former; they only differ as water in a stagnant marsh from the same water upbearing navies on its bosom, or when converted into vapor, carrying along prodigious masses by its elastic force.

The *imagery of a hymn must be appropriate, and, as far as possible, Scriptural.* The reasons for this are obvious. One is, that true taste requires everything to be appropriate and in keeping. We know so little of religion beyond what is revealed, that it is safest to keep, as closely as possible, to the written Word. The jealousy with which the Secession and Covenanter Churches guard psalmody, refusing to sing anything but Scrip-

ture, has its origin in a noble feeling of loyalty to God. It is true, that they allow their principle, in its practical application, to degenerate into the ludicrous. Instead of chanting the words of our noble English version, they prefer to sing Rouse's wretched attempt at versification. We would do well, however, to adhere to their principle, and, in our hymnology, keep as close to the Word of God as possible. Sentiment and classic style are a poor substitute for the sublime truths of revelation.

Besides, it is plain, that any other imagery than that of Scripture, unless used very sparingly and chastely, will draw off the mind from devotion. The associations of ideas are so innumerable; the mind is so quick in suggestion and analogy, that in an instant a classic or romantic illustration will carry it off from the evangelic current of thought. It is even important, we think, to observe the difference between words that are generally used in romantic and classic and in sacred poetry. If it be said that our hymns will grow monotonous, if confined to one round of expression, we remark that words are never commonplace in themselves, and that, however dogged they may be by use, they can be rendered entirely fresh by proper setting and disposition.

It is only necessary to add, that if we desire to carry the masses with us—and this is indispensable to the very idea of a true hymn—there is no way so effectual as to keep close to that Book, every word of which is familiar to every Christian. We need not complain of want of variety. No one who has studied Scripture deeply will ever make this objection. In truth, the masters of the lyre, even in secular poetry, resort to this unfailing fountain of imagery. Milton is full of it. The infidel Shelley greatly admired it, and some of Byron's most magnificent sonnets are simply the Hebrew imagery of Scripture.

We have always felt that, in this respect, the well-known hymn of Dr. Watts is almost perfect:

There is a land of pure delight.

Every image is scriptural, every suggestion appropriate, every

association holy. We doubt whether any uninspired production has oftener softened the heart or moistened the eyelids.

Passing, for the present, the subject of the alteration of hymns, we remark, that omissions are not always judiciously made. Some parts of a comparatively long sacred song might suit one mood of feeling in a congregation, and other parts a different mood. It is a question, whether the whole of some such songs had not better be inserted, that selections may be made at the moment. We only refer here to some of very superior merit.

There is a hymn of Erskine, in which he describes the songs of heaven in view of Redemption. Almost all the books give the more vague and general parts of it—the beginning and conclusion—but omit its heart, the parts that are most expressive and picturesque. We have seen these stanzas but in one book. We never have heard anything sung in church with more effect. We quote from memory:

> But when to Calvary they turn
> Silent their harps abide;
> Suspended songs a moment mourn
> The God that loved and died.
>
> Then, all at once, to loudest strains
> They summon every chord,
> Tell how he triumphed o'er his pains,
> And chant their living Lord.

In that exquisite hymn,

> Behold the glories of the Lamb,

the angels, the Church triumphant, and the Church militant, sing in chorus the praises of the Redeemer. A popular book omits the stanza which connects *us* with the heavenly host, leaving us out of the concert:

> Thou hast redeemed our souls with blood,
> Hast set the prisoners free—
> Hast made us kings and priests to God,
> And we shall reign with Thee!

We would suggest to those who have charge of this interest-

ing and responsible duty of selecting the sacred songs of the Church, that they examine the old hymns and ancient chorals. No one would wish to modernize the language of the Scriptures, but it may be questioned whether we have not been too anxious to remove their archaic aspect from our hymns. Fortlage, author of the *Gesänge Christliche Vorzeit*, thus speaks of the old Latin hymns: "As we listen, the soul welters in deep and strong emotion. From this has arisen whatever of most sublime, magnificent, and fair, the sacred poetry of Christendom has brought to light. In it the organ-pipes, which thunder through heaven and earth, seem in full play, as, with shudders of inner unworthiness, with cries and melting tears, with jubilant shouts over the goodness of God, and plaints and sighs over Adam's fall, and with triumphant strains that praise the great Redemption, they thrill through the universe."*

Dr. Daniel, again, in his Comments on the Hymns of the Old Latin Church, "has sought to show that in them we must look for the originals of many a strain and stave still sounding in the Churches of modern Christendom. Stephenson, in his 'Hymns of the Anglo-Saxon Church,' has preserved for us some of the canticles which were sung and chanted by our English forefathers; and though the hymnology of the English language is very far from containing so many additions to its contents from the Latin, as are found in the tongues of the continent, yet is the sacred poetry of the middle ages an appreciable element, even in the liturgy and worship of English Protestantism." "Among the many examples of German hymns translated by Luther from the Latin; the best known are, perhaps,

Nun komm der Heiden Heiland—

From the

Veni Redemptor gentium,

of Ambrose, and the

Christ, der du bist Tag und Licht—

From the

Christe, qui lux es et dies.

* North Am. Rev. clxxvi.

To these we may add, such reproductions by other hands, as those in which the 'Urbs beata' repeats its 'Vision of Peace:'

Jerusalem, du hochgebaute Stadt.

Or as when the 'ecce homo' of sacred Latin verse, the passion hymn of St. Bernard,

Salve caput cruentatum,

haunts us again in Paul Gerhard's touching version;

O Haupt voll Blut und Wunden,
Voll Schmerz und voller Hohn."*

A kindred subject to this of the old chorals is the reflection of different Churches in their hymns. Expressions are not more varied in human faces than the phase of Christianity which is characteristically presented in the psalmody of different Churches. An expert could probably tell almost at once to what Church a particular hymn belonged, even where no doctrines peculiar to that denomination are expressed.

The Moravian hymns, of which there are clear traces in Charles Wesley, are affectionate, simple, sometimes passionate, and all tend at once to the Redeemer. The genius of this remarkable people is at once seen in their sacred poetry. Faith in Christ is their characteristic. They cling in simple love to the cross. The world has reached them less than other people. Their hymns have been spoken of as sometimes erotic, but they are not probably so to them. The same faith that leads them to Greenland and South Africa to take up the very worst cases of humanity, because they are the worst, leads them to gather like children around their common Saviour, and sing hymns that are almost domestic. The moral is, that we should engraft something of the best and finest element of the hymnology of each Church upon our own. Does any one doubt for a moment that we doctrinal, business-like, dry Presbyterians, would be improved by something of the affectionate, home-like character of the Moravians? If so, it will do us good to sing some of their hymns, and soften under their quiet influence.

* Ibid.

Branching from this Moravian idea are two somewhat diverse from each other,—the Lutheran and Reformed on the one hand, and the Methodist on the other. The German language is considered as unusually rich in hymns. The quiet character of the Moravians is seen in the Lutheran psalmody, but there is a distinction, nevertheless. The sinewy massiveness of Luther is felt in some of them; the contemplative and somewhat phlegmatic element of the nation is seen in others; while Christianity appears, though not deficient in depth, in its historic rather than in its doctrinal aspect. While a translation of these hymns is extremely difficult, yet their spirit might be very advantageously transferred.

The subjective tendency of the Moravian hymns appears in an exaggerated form in the Methodist, combined, however, with a fervor of devotion which any Church might gladly welcome. It must be acknowledged that some of the popular Methodist hymns are deficient in taste; but the genius and piety of Charles Wesley has idealized all that is noblest and most excellent in the denomination. His hymns are making their way into all collections, and bearing with them the faith, and love, and active piety, characteristic of a people to whom has been committed especially the pioneer work of the Church.

Episcopacy has not added as much to hymnology as we should have expected from its learning, refinement, and efficiency. It has contented itself with a passive recipiency of some of the old Catholic chants and chorals, and for psalms prefers the collection which comes nearest to Rouse, the most commonplace of attempts to versify the Psalms of David. It is in other ways than in these meagre performances that we are to be benefited by Episcopal experience; their churchly spirit comes to us in the chants and other parts of their service.

The Congregationalists are eclectic. Their characteristic absence of special church feeling is seen in their adoption into their collections of every form of sacred song, from an ancient choral to a Unitarian ode or a melody of Thomas Moore. Yet, unfettered as they are, they have brought in much that is beautiful, and they are well-known as most diligent cultivators of sacred music.

The genius and spirit of Watts seem to have commended themselves so thoroughly to Presbyterians as to show a characteristic likeness. His traits, accordingly, are clear doctrinal statement; Scriptural imagery; the atonement as central to Christianity; reverent devotion; a lofty but steady and serious imagination, and a subdued feeling, as fearing to overstep the limits belonging to the sinful creature. It were well if Presbyterians could borrow from other Churches a more social and cheerful spirit, more simplicity and affectionateness, and if they could gain in richness what they might healthfully lose in formality. In carefully avoiding everything sensuous, Presbyterianism sometimes degenerates into dryness, and in instinctively informing its services with manliness carried to severity, it loses in sweetness and tenderness.

We are greatly delighted that our Church has taken up with unanimity the subject of chanting the psalms, and that it is committed to so competent a person as Dr. Duffield. We hope that this work will speedily be issued by the Publication Committee, and that provision will then be made for its introduction into all our churches. The chants ought not merely to be used as voluntaries by the church choirs, but should be introduced occasionally in place of the regular psalm or hymn. Our service needs to be enriched without losing its simplicity. The accord of the people can best be given in our service through its musical form. The same chant being sung to the same psalm, it will soon be caught up by the people.

Chanting, perhaps, comes nearest to the ancient choral service. It is singular that those whose principles require them to adhere to the words of Scripture, should object to that worship which uses the *ipsissima verba* of our common Bible. It is a source of much pleasure to us that our Church is not so fettered but that she can use whatever is valuable in other forms of worship, provided only they are for edification among her own people.

There is but one other topic which we desire to include in this Article. It is the necessity and duty of *congregational singing*. We have no hesitation in stating our opinion in the

broadest and most unqualified manner. It is, that *there is no suitable worship unless the whole congregation sing.* In all churches which have liturgical services there is an arrangement for the people to join in the worship audibly. They pronounce the Amen; they murmur the Lord's prayer; they repeat the creed; in some services they make other responses. Presbyterianism rejects the whole; the minister conducts the entire audible service. Still, there remain the praises of God in the sanctuary, the highest effort of which humanity is capable, sustained by all the power of poetry and music, and the devotion of an ardent spirit. If a thousand voices swell together in harmony to God, we can dispense with the audible sound in the responsive service.

When a choir is composed, as we have seen one, of near fifty persons, there is some excuse for it, but even then it is the wrong way. We may *endure* it, but we never can make it right. The people of God, old and young, rich and poor, should sing the praises of God. If they are not taught in music, they *ought* to be taught. Six hundred performers sing and play in Handel's Creation; why not train a thousand men, women, and children, to sing the praises of God? It matters not how much time it takes to train them. *Take the time.* It matters not how much it costs. *Pay the price.* Jehovah is worthy of it, and human beings can be engaged in no nobler work.

We know that there are many objections. We do not care for the objections. A small choir to sing for God's people is wrong, and it cannot be made right. We have no kind of objection to a choir as a leader of the congregation, *provided always* that it does not exemplify the political motto, "Power is always stealing from the many to the few." We are perfectly inflexible in this matter; *the whole congregation ought to sing, and some plan must be devised to accomplish it.*

Here, as elsewhere, there are two feelings that are perfectly distinct. One is a refined sentiment. This is gratified by exquisite singing—the highest form of art, such as is attained by the opera. This steals into Christian congregations insidiously, and finds its gratification in scientific playing and sing-

ing. It is the sentiment of the few and not of the many. The other feeling is that of the vast majority of mankind. It does not reject science or art. It is not opposed to a grand organ or to music of a high order. But it considers these to be mere accessories. The Christian, besides worshipping God in secret and in his family, desires to praise him worthily in the great congregation. That this may be done, some worthy method must be found to unite multitudes together in one act of devotion. All hearts must be lifted up together. But it will not accomplish the full desire of the soul, if they be lifted up silently; praise must have voice as well as gesture. The model is in the Apocalypse. "And when he had taken the book, the four living creatures, and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints. And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests; and we shall reign on the earth." This is the beginning of the praise sung by the ransomed Church. Now the angels mingle with the strain. "And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." Now the universe join the Church and the angels. "And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, forever and ever."

The fitting representative type of this in our temples, upon which gold and art and eloquence have been lavished without stint to make them worthy of their Divine inhabitant, is considered

to be the hiring of the voices of—two women, a man, and a boy. We hope the anticlimax will do some good.

We are opposed to paying the members of choirs, except the organist and the leader. Let them cultivate music and teach the people. But God's Church should sing themselves. If some half dozen singers are hired, the "young men and maidens" will not sing with them, and the whole becomes a "performance," paid for and duly executed.

The praises of God cannot be suitably sung without volume as well as melody. Say what we may of the heart, no man worships thoroughly who does not use his voice. Why not receive the communion with the heart only? These fashions of letting the minister stand up by himself to pray as if it were his business, and three or four people in the gallery to sing as if it were their business, are ruinous to the very idea of devotion. When God's ambassador says, "Let us pray," let the people rise and stand up uncovered and reverent before God; and when he says, "Let us sing to the praise of God," let a thousand voices swell to heaven like the sound of many waters. We go to church to worship God; to worship together; that heart may enkindle heart; to feel the communion of saints; to gaze at the throne of our Father, Saviour, Comforter, through tears of joy and longing. A cold, formal service robs God and man; as a bright, rich and affectionate one, makes the church the home of God, and the very gate of heaven.

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